

Thelypteris palustris Schott

Marsh Fern

Native

GB & England: Least Concern

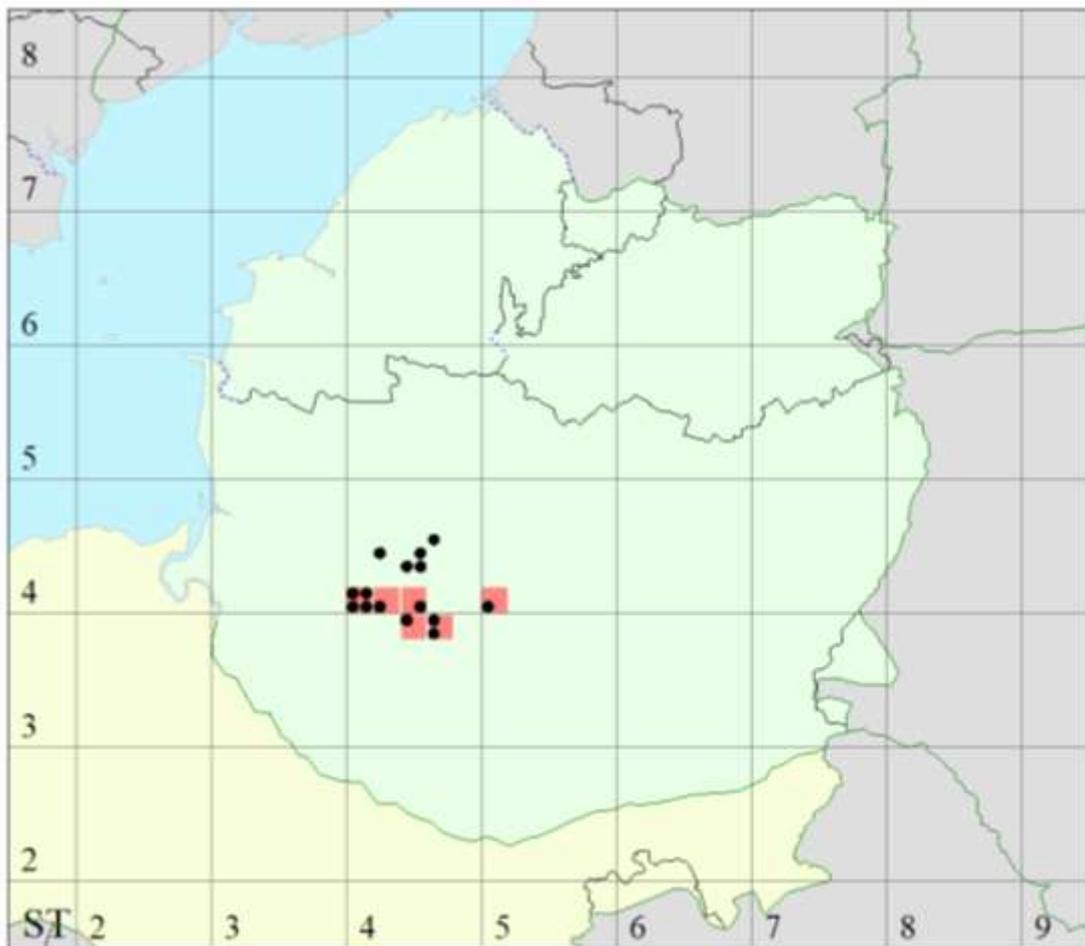
GB Scarce

VC5 Absent; VC6 Not Scarce

A perennial rhizomatous fern of permanently wet, often peaty soils in mires, fens and reed swamps, persisting under shade in closed carr. Absent from VC5 and now restricted to the Avalon Marshes area of VC6. Once found by R.V. Sherring in a boggy spot on the coast between Portishead and Clevedon [ST47], where it grew with *Menyanthes*, screened by shrubs and brambles (White, 1886, 1912); however White himself failed to find it and supposed the site had been cleared and drained. In 1907, this fern was shown to him by Arthur E.G. Way on the swampy edge of some water-holes in a marsh between Wraxall and Tickenham [ST47] (White, 1912). It was collected from there by M.A.G. Livett in 1915 (specimen in **TTN**); however there have been no further records for the North Somerset Levels. First recorded in Somerset by Sole (1791) in abundance on the Glastonbury and Burtle peat moors, it is still locally abundant in this area. It is now found at Catcott Reserve and Catcott Parish Plot; Westhay Heath and Shapwick Heath; Ashcott Plot, Sharpham Moor Plot and Street Heath; a fen near Meare and woodland near Glastonbury; Tadhams Moor, Westhay Moor and beside North Chine Drove. *Thelypteris palustris* declined in Britain and Ireland before 1930 due to drainage, but there have been fewer losses since then (Preston *et al.*, 2002). This species is found at scattered sites across England, Wales, southern Scotland and Ireland; sites in Somerset are within this range.



Thelypteris palustris at Ashcott Plot (2017). Photo: HJC



Distribution of *Thelypteris palustris* in Somerset (VC6), mapped using MapMate. Black dots are post-2000 records; red squares are 1987-1999 records



Thelypteris palustris near Meare (2018). Photo: FJR